

VERTIGO

**WILLINGHAM
BUCKINGHAM
LEIALOHA**

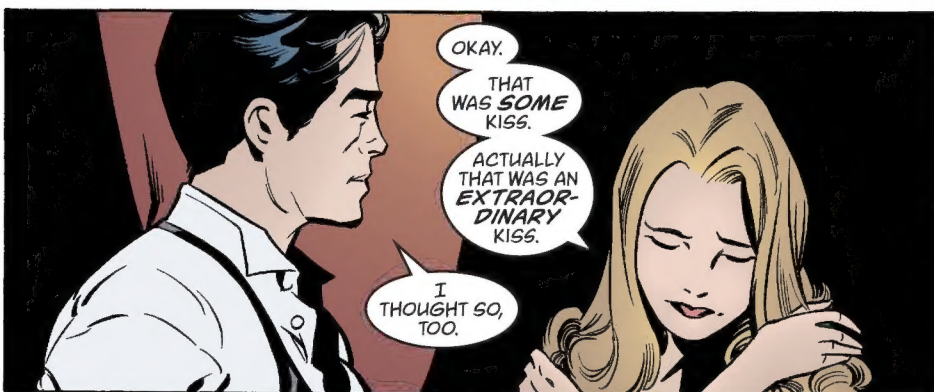
FABLES

no. **43**
Jan 06

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JJ05





D'JINN & TONIC WITH A TWIST

Chapter TWO of
Arabian Nights
(and days)

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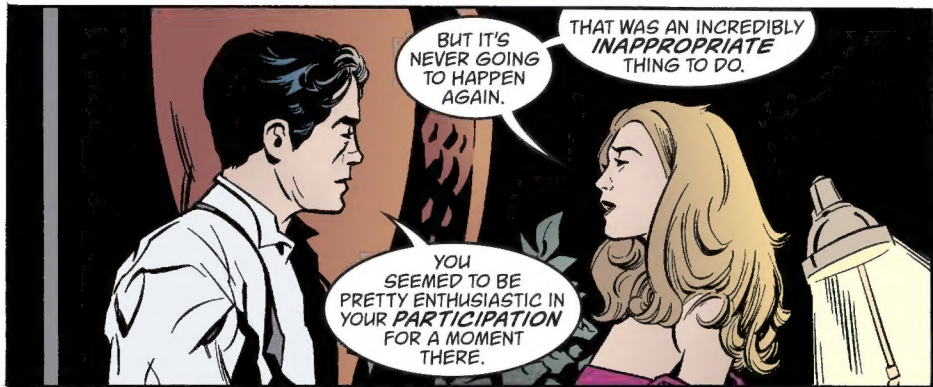
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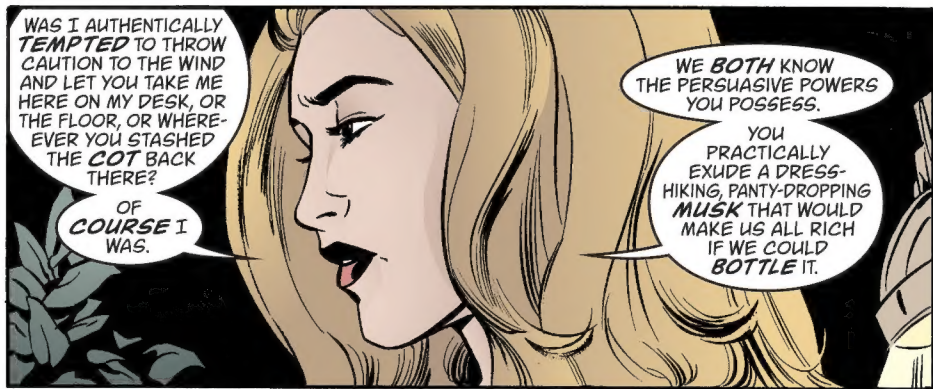
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BUT IT'S NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN.

THAT WAS AN INCREDIBLY **INAPPROPRIATE** THING TO DO.

YOU SEEMED TO BE PRETTY ENTHUSIASTIC IN YOUR PARTICIPATION FOR A MOMENT THERE.

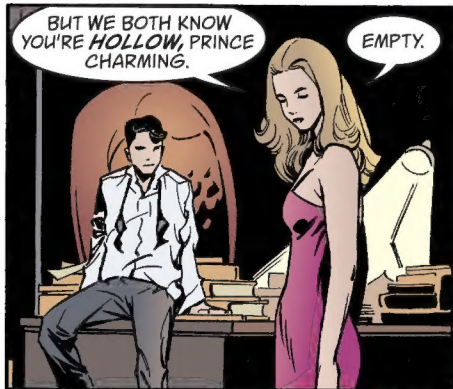


WAS I AUTHENTICALLY **TEMPTED** TO THROW CAUTION TO THE WIND AND LET YOU TAKE ME HERE ON MY DESK, OR THE FLOOR, OR WHEREVER YOU STASHED THE **COT** BACK THERE?

OF **COURSE** I WAS.

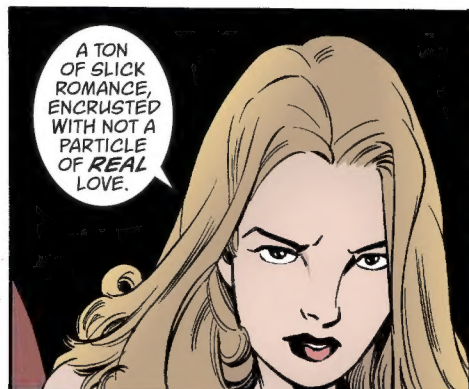
WE **BOTH** KNOW THE PERSUASIVE POWERS YOU POSSESS.

YOU PRACTICALLY EXUDE A DRESS-HIKING, PANTY-DROPPING **MUSK** THAT WOULD MAKE US ALL RICH IF WE COULD **BOTTLE** IT.

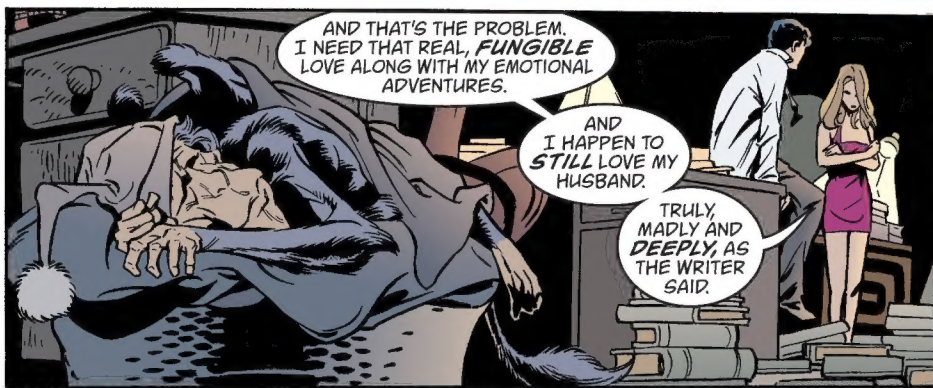


BUT WE BOTH KNOW YOU'RE **HOLLOW**, PRINCE CHARMING.

EMPTY.



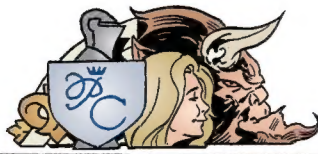
A TON OF SLICK ROMANCE, ENCRUSTED WITH NOT A PARTICLE OF **REAL** LOVE.



AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM. I NEED THAT **REAL**, **FUNGIBLE** LOVE ALONG WITH MY EMOTIONAL ADVENTURES.

AND I HAPPEN TO **STILL** LOVE MY HUSBAND.

TRULY, MADLY AND **DEEPLY**, AS THE WRITER SAID.



I KNOW IT LOOKS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD LIKE WE DO NOTHING BUT BICKER AND SNIPE AT EACH OTHER-- AND TRUTH IS WE DO **PLENTY** OF THAT.

ANYONE WHO'S BEEN MARRIED FOR A WEEK GRIPES AND COMPLAINS TO EACH OTHER, AND WE'VE BEEN AT IT FOR **CENTURIES**.

BUT THERE'S AN UNSHAKABLE BEDROCK OF TRUST AND LOYALTY UNDERNEATH ALL THAT-- AND WHO KNOWS?

MAYBE THAT'S WHY WE CAN **SAFELY** CRAB AT EACH OTHER THE WAY WE DO.

BUT, IF YOU LEARN NOTHING ELSE, KNOW **THIS**: EVEN AFTER ALL THIS TIME, HE'S EVERY ADVENTURE I EVER WANT TO BE ON.

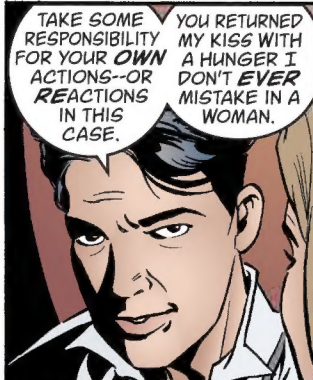
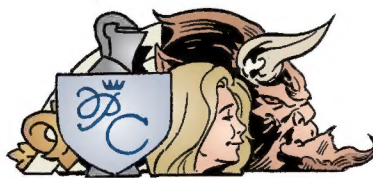
AND I WOULDN'T JEOPARDIZE MY MARRIAGE NO MATTER **WHAT** PASSING STATE OF RANDINESS YOU'VE CAUGHT ME IN.

PRETTY SPEECH, BEAUTY, BUT TWO THINGS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER.

FIRST, NO ONE THINKS YOUR HUSBAND AND YOU BICKER AT EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME. EVERYONE THINKS YOU DO IT TO **HIM** ALL THE TIME.

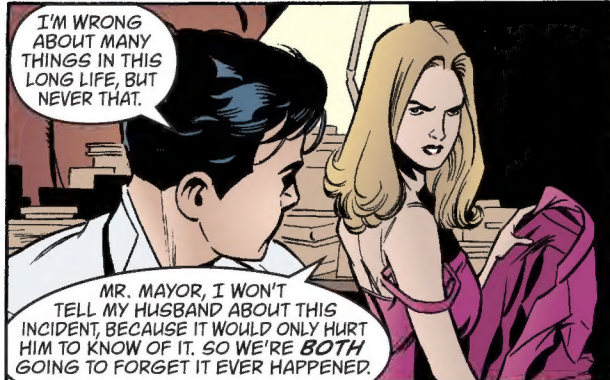
THERE'S AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE THAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE OUT AND EXAMINE SOMEDAY.

SECOND, YOU CAN'T EASILY DISMISS WHAT NEARLY HAPPENED HERE AS AN EFFECT OF SOME SORT OF SUPER **SEDUCTION** POWERS I HAVE.



TAKE SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR **OWN** ACTIONS--OR REACTIONS IN THIS CASE.

YOU RETURNED MY KISS WITH A HUNGER I DON'T **EVER** MISTAKE IN A WOMAN.



I'M WRONG ABOUT MANY THINGS IN THIS LONG LIFE, BUT NEVER THAT.

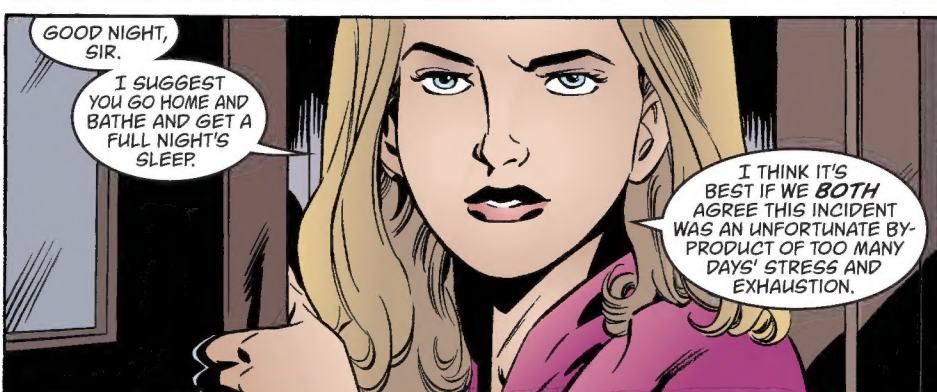
MR. MAYOR, I WON'T TELL MY HUSBAND ABOUT THIS INCIDENT, BECAUSE IT WOULD ONLY HURT HIM TO KNOW OF IT. SO WE'RE **BOTH** GOING TO FORGET IT EVER HAPPENED.



BUT IF YOU **EVER** TOUCH ME AGAIN, I **WILL** TELL HIM, AND YOU WON'T LIKE THE RESULT.

I'LL CONTINUE WORKING HERE--FOR NOW, BUT DON'T EVER EXPECT TO FIND YOURSELF ALONE WITH ME AGAIN--

--IN THIS OR ANY ROOM.

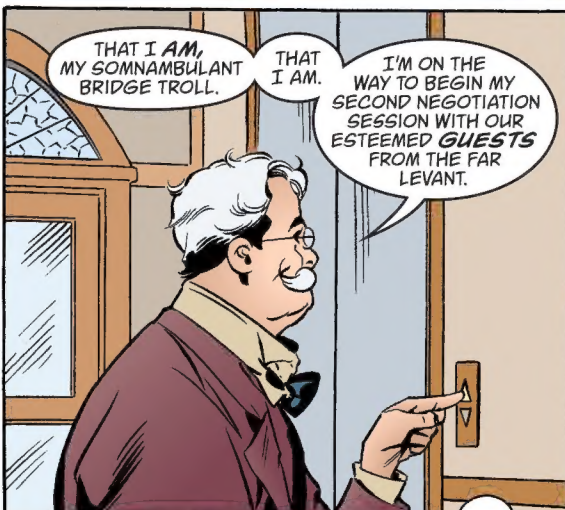
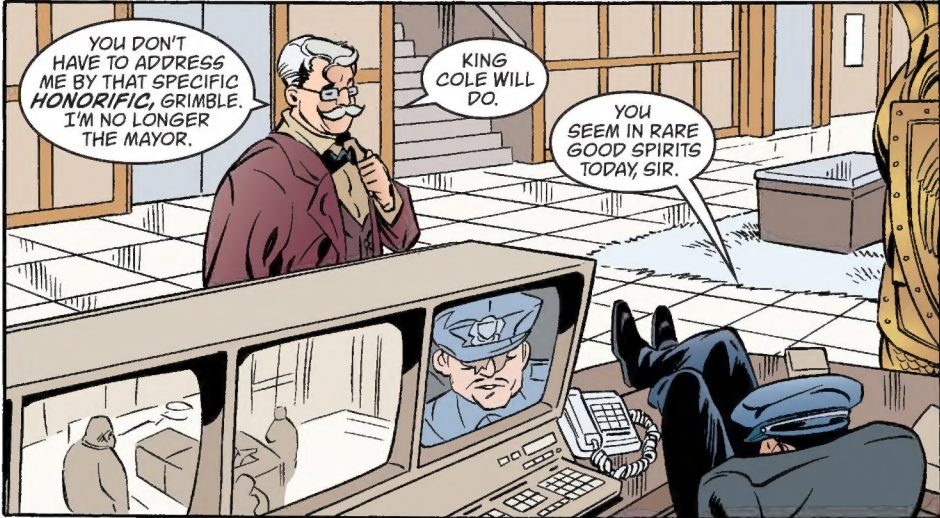
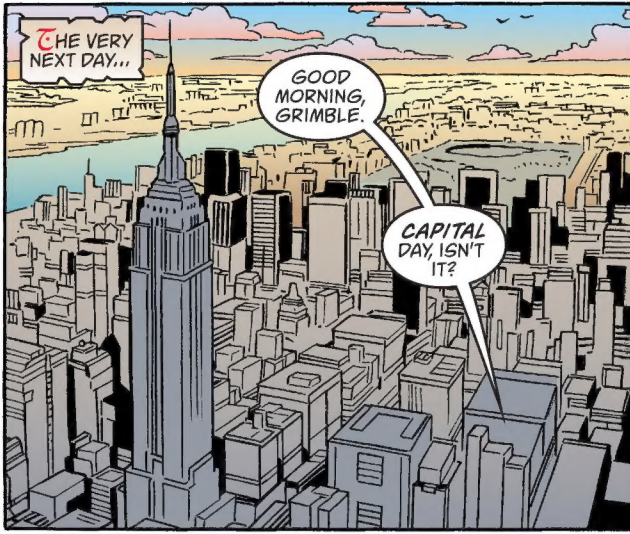
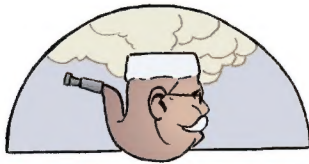


GOOD NIGHT, SIR.

I SUGGEST YOU GO HOME AND BATHE AND GET A FULL NIGHT'S SLEEP.

I THINK IT'S BEST IF WE **BOTH** AGREE THIS INCIDENT WAS AN UNFORTUNATE BY-PRODUCT OF TOO MANY DAYS' STRESS AND EXHAUSTION.







THEY ARE A MOST *PERPLEXING* PEOPLE, SIRRAH. MORE IMPOVERISHED, I SURMISE, THAN THEY HOPE TO LET ON.

THEIR BUILDINGS ARE SHABBY, THEY SEND A *JANITOR* TO GREET US, AND THEY CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A *DOORMAN* FOR THEIR CENTRAL RESIDENCE.

WE'LL SEE, NOBLE YUSUF. WE'LL SEE.

KNOCK KNOCK

EVEN THE HUMBLE *ONION* ONLY REVEALS ITSELF ONE LAYER AT A TIME. WE MUST PEEL AT THIS COMMUNITY A BIT MORE BEFORE WE CAN HOPE TO KNOW ITS SECRETS.

NEVERTHELESS, O PRINCE OF SEAFARERS AND KING OF MERCHANTS, I ADVISE MARTIAL *INVASION* OF THESE UNWASHED AND UNDER-EDUCATED WESTERN FABLES.

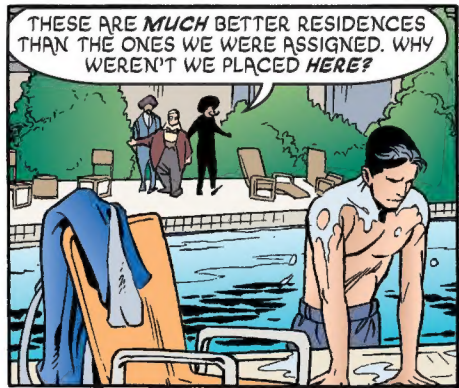
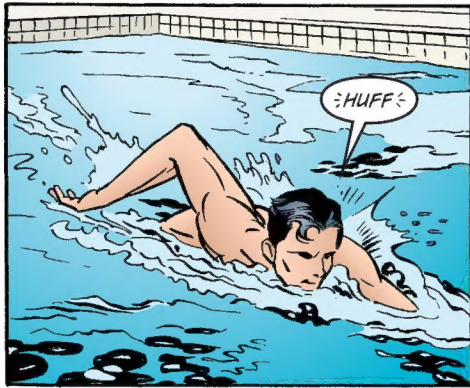
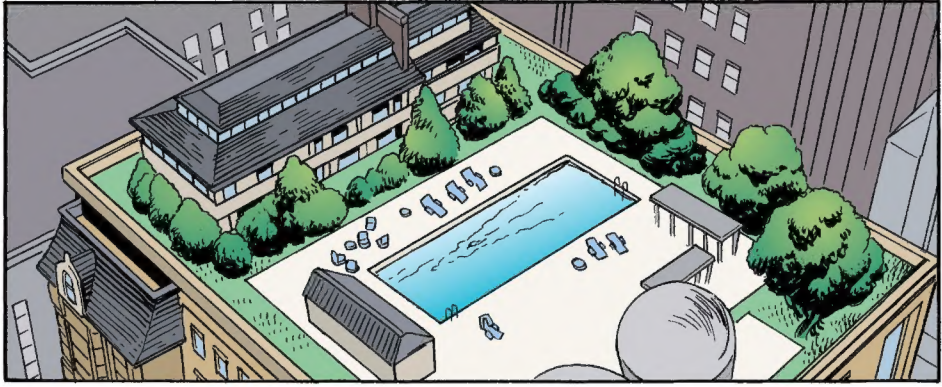
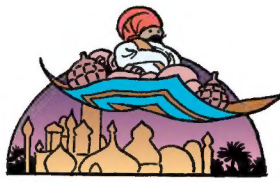
YES, WE SHOULD *JOIN* THEM, BUT ONLY IN THE WAY THE CONQUEROR JOINS THE CONQUERED. LASTING PEACE IS ONLY POSSIBLE BETWEEN SUBDUER AND SUBDUED.

GOOD MORNING, GENTLEMEN. THE BLESSING OF ALLAH ON THIS HOUSE AND ALL WHO DWELL WITHIN. I TRUST I'VE NOT ARRIVED TOO *EARLY*?

OF COURSE NOT, GREAT KING OF SONG AND STORY.

WE HAD TO BE UP WITH THE DAWN FOR FIRST PRAYERS, SO OUR DAY IS *WELL* BEGUN.

FINE, THEN SHALL WE PROCEED? THE MAYOR OF FABLETOWN WILL RECEIVE US UPSTAIRS.



THESE ARE *MUCH* BETTER RESIDENCES THAN THE ONES WE WERE ASSIGNED. WHY WEREN'T WE PLACED *HERE*?



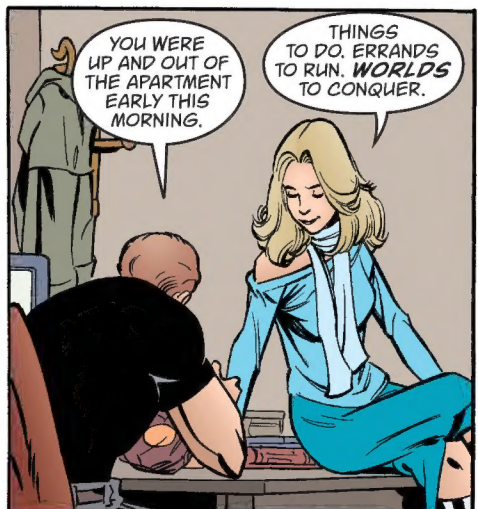
BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE THE MAYOR LIVES. AND WE DON'T DISPLACE THE MAYOR, NO MATTER *HOW* AUSPICIOUS THE GUEST.

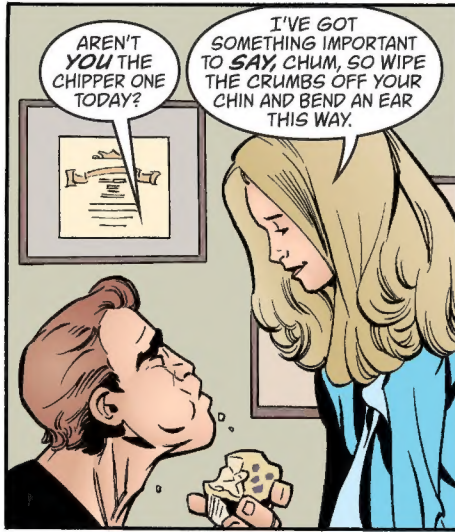


GENTLEMEN, SHALL WE GET STARTED?

WHAT DID THE INSANE MAYOR SAY?

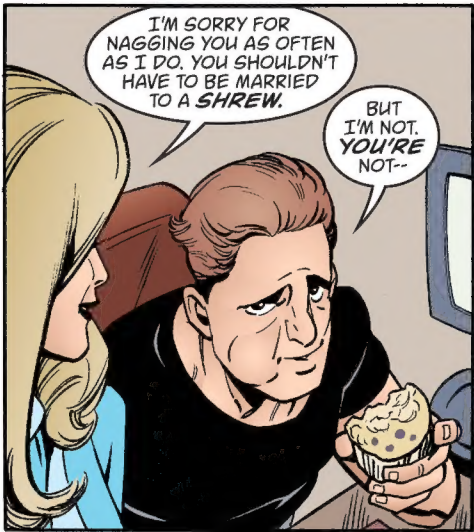
HE *EXTOLLED* YOUR MANIFEST VIRTUES AND HONOR, WISHED A *BLESSING* ON YOUR LIVES, AND INVITED US TO SIT.





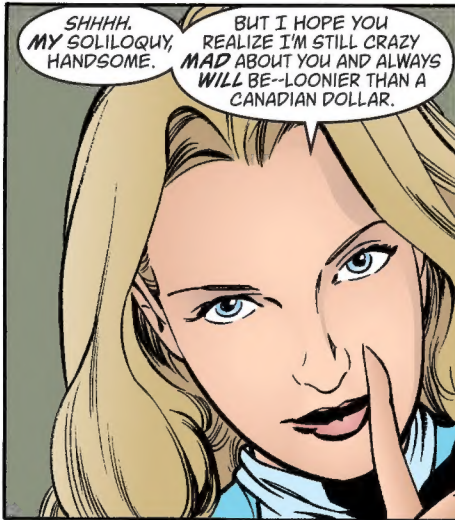
AREN'T YOU THE CHIPPER ONE TODAY?

I'VE GOT SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY, CHUM, SO WIPE THE CRUMBS OFF YOUR CHIN AND BEND AN EAR THIS WAY.



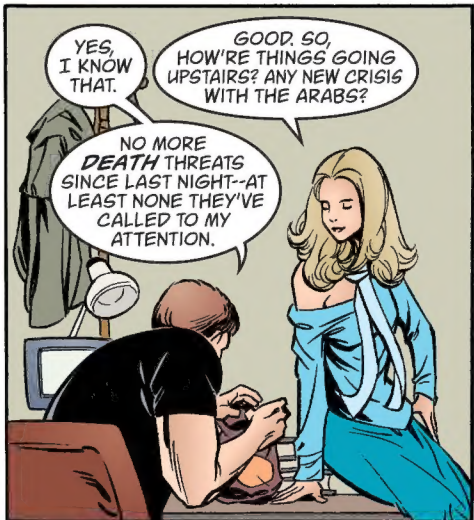
I'M SORRY FOR NAGGING YOU AS OFTEN AS I DO. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE MARRIED TO A SHREW.

BUT I'M NOT. YOU'RE NOT--



SHHHH. MY SOLOLOQUY, HANDSOME.

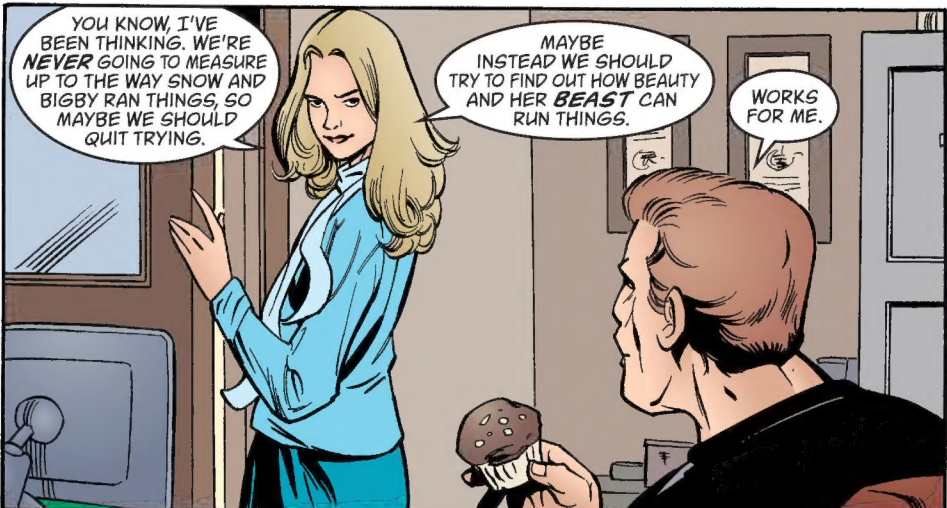
BUT I HOPE YOU REALIZE I'M STILL CRAZY MAD ABOUT YOU AND ALWAYS WILL BE--LOONIER THAN A CANADIAN DOLLAR.



YES, I KNOW THAT.

GOOD SO, HOW'RE THINGS GOING UPSTAIRS? ANY NEW CRISIS WITH THE ARABS?

NO MORE DEATH THREATS SINCE LAST NIGHT--AT LEAST NONE THEY'VE CALLED TO MY ATTENTION.



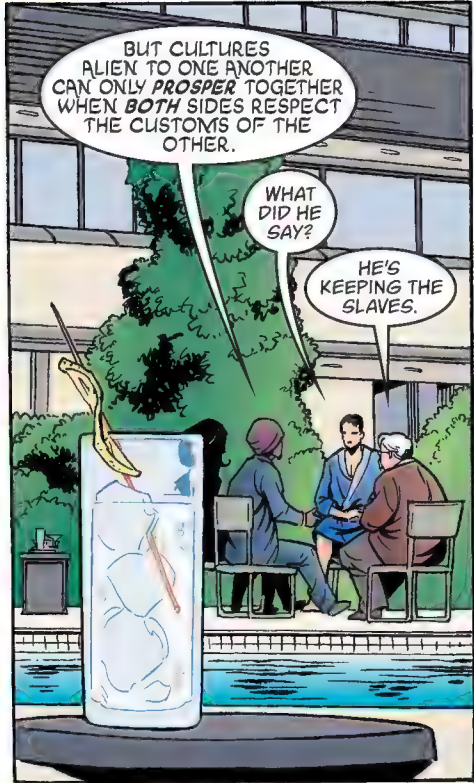
YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN THINKING. WE'RE NEVER GOING TO MEASURE UP TO THE WAY SNOW AND BIGBY RAN THINGS, SO MAYBE WE SHOULD QUIT TRYING.

MAYBE INSTEAD WE SHOULD TRY TO FIND OUT HOW BEAUTY AND HER BEAST CAN RUN THINGS.

WORKS FOR ME.



AS TO THE MATTER OF OUR SLAVES, LET ME HASTEN TO REMIND YOUR PRINCE THAT YOUR WAYS MAY NOT BE OUR WAYS.



BUT CULTURES ALIEN TO ONE ANOTHER CAN ONLY PROSPER TOGETHER WHEN BOTH SIDES RESPECT THE CUSTOMS OF THE OTHER.

WHAT DID HE SAY?

HE'S KEEPING THE SLAVES.



OVER MY DEAD BODY.

MY HONORED MAYOR (MAY ALLAH BLESS HIM WITH SONS IN ABUNDANCE) AGREES THAT WE MUST RECOGNIZE AND RESPECT EACH OTHER'S WAYS.



HE PROMISES TO RESPECT YOUR VENERABLE CUSTOM TO KEEP SLAVES.

MARVELOUS.

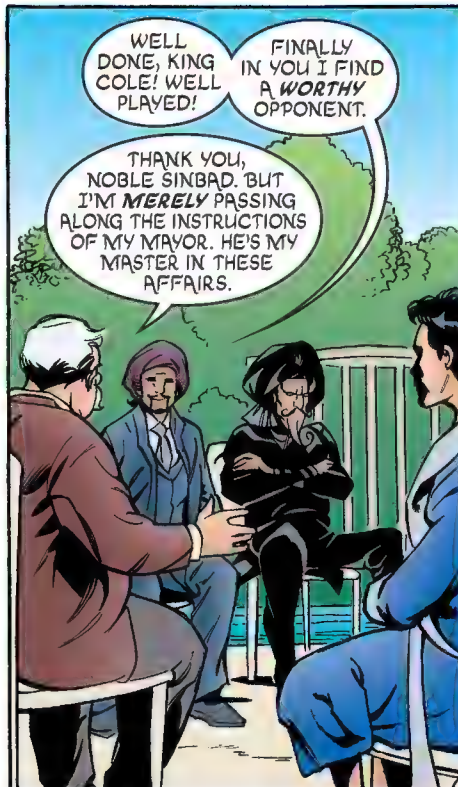
IN RETURN HE TRUSTS YOU'LL RESPECT OUR VENERABLE CUSTOM TO HANG SLAVES WHERESOEVER WE FIND THEM.



OUTRAGEOUS!



SIT DOWN, YUSUF. YOUR CONSTANT EXPLOSIONS OF INDIGNATION WEARY ME.



WELL DONE, KING COLE! WELL PLAYED!

FINALLY IN YOU I FIND A WORTHY OPPONENT.

THANK YOU, NOBLE SINBAD. BUT I'M MERELY PASSING ALONG THE INSTRUCTIONS OF MY MAYOR. HE'S MY MASTER IN THESE AFFAIRS.



OF COURSE, GOOD KING, OF COURSE.

TELL ME, DO YOU HAPPEN TO PLAY CHESS?

ONLY EVERY DAY, SIRRAH. CARE FOR A GAME?



EACH OF MY DETECTION SPELLS RETURNED A POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION, SHERIFF.

OUR ARABIAN ENVOYS DEFINITELY BROUGHT A D'JINN WITH THEM.

D'JINN? IS THAT SOMETHING LIKE A GENII?

IT'S EXACTLY LIKE A GENII, MR. BEAST. "GENII" IS JUST A CORRUPTION OF THE PROPER TERM.

SO HOW BAD CAN THAT BE, FRAU TOTENKINDER? THEY JUST GRANT WISHES, RIGHT?

"YES, THAT'S RIGHT. THEY GRANT WISHES. ANY WISHES. LET'S SAY I HAD ONE AND WISHED FOR FABLETOWN TO BE DESTROYED--OR NEW YORK--OR AMERICA."

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? THEY'RE THAT POWERFUL?

THEY'RE CREATURES OF ALMOST PURE MAGIC--CLOSE TO 97 PERCENT.



"COMPARE *THAT* TO YOUR TYPICAL ACCOMPLISHED SORCERER, WHOSE MAKE-UP IS PRIMARILY OF MUNDANE MATTER AND ENERGY WITH SOME *SLIGHT* MAGIC INFECTION.

"EVEN YOUR AVERAGE ELDER GOD IS BARELY A FIFTY-FIFTY MIXTURE OF MAGIC AND MUNDANE MATERIAL.

WOW.

"AND THEY'RE WILD THINGS, WITH NO SENSE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

"IF A D'JINN WERE TO BE SET FREE--UNFETTERED FROM HIS GEAS TO PERFORM THREE WISHES--WELL, LET'S JUST SAY THAT MORE THAN *ONE* WORLD HAS DIED DUE TO THEIR ANTICS."



SO HOW DO WE STOP ONE?

WE DON'T. WE CAN'T KILL THEM, OR FORCE THEM, OR CHALLENGE THEM DIRECTLY.

AT BEST WE CAN TRICK THEM, BUT THEY'RE WARY ABOUT THAT SINCE TRICKERY WAS USED TO TRAP THEM IN THEIR PRESENT PREDICAMENT.

"IN ANCIENT TIMES, WHEN SULYMON THE WISE DETERMINED TO RID THE WORLD OF D'JINNS, HE TRICKED THEM INTO ENTERING THE CAPTURE BOTTLES.

IF YOU'RE SO ALL-POWERFUL, HOW IS IT I DOUBT YOU CAN ESCAPE EVEN A SIMPLE OBJECT LIKE--

--LET'S SEE--

--OH, HERE'S AN OLD PORCELAIN BOTTLE, NOW EMPTY OF ITS TINCTURES.

"BUT THE BOTTLES WERE ACTUALLY SOPHISTICATED GATEWAYS, EACH TO ITS OWN POCKET UNIVERSE, CRAFTED BY DAEDALUS, THE GREATEST SORCERER-SCIENTIST OF THAT AGE."

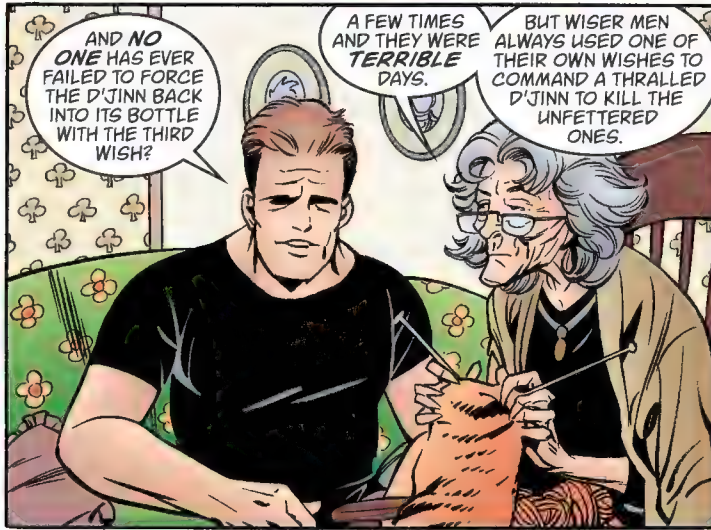
WE'LL FINALLY PUT THEIR POWERS TO CONSTRUCTIVE USE.

AND THEN, IF THEY'RE DISCOVERED AND FREED, THEY'LL HAVE TO PERFORM THREE TASKS FOR WHOEVER RELEASES THEM.

AS LONG AS THE THIRD WISH IS ALWAYS USED TO FORCE IT BACK INTO THE BOTTLE, THE CYCLE WILL CONTINUE AND THEY'LL NEVER TROUBLE US AGAIN.

I'LL SPREAD THE WORD.

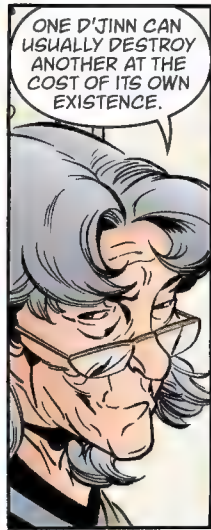




AND **NO ONE** HAS EVER FAILED TO FORCE THE D'JINN BACK INTO ITS BOTTLE WITH THE THIRD WISH?

A FEW TIMES AND THEY WERE **TERRIBLE** DAYS.

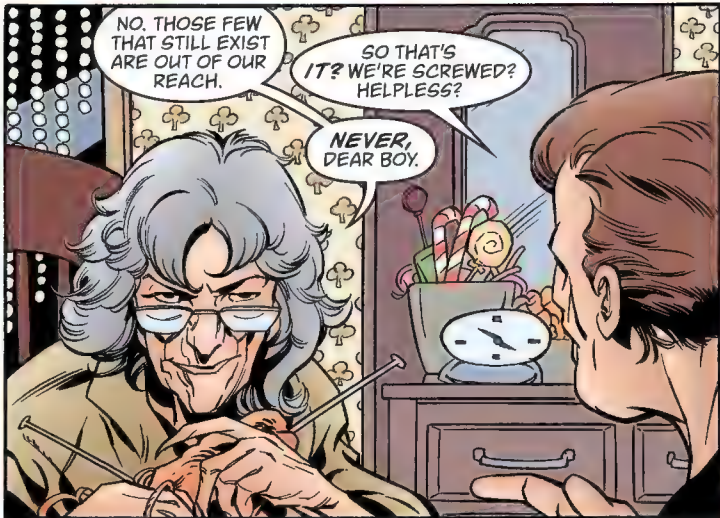
BUT WISER MEN ALWAYS USED ONE OF THEIR OWN WISHES TO COMMAND A THRALLED D'JINN TO KILL THE UNFETTERED ONES.



ONE D'JINN CAN USUALLY DESTROY ANOTHER AT THE COST OF ITS OWN EXISTENCE.



SO THAT'S WHAT WE NEED TO DO? FIND ANOTHER D'JINN TO KILL **THIS** ONE?



NO. THOSE FEW THAT STILL EXIST ARE OUT OF OUR REACH.

SO THAT'S IT? WE'RE SCREWED? HELPLESS?

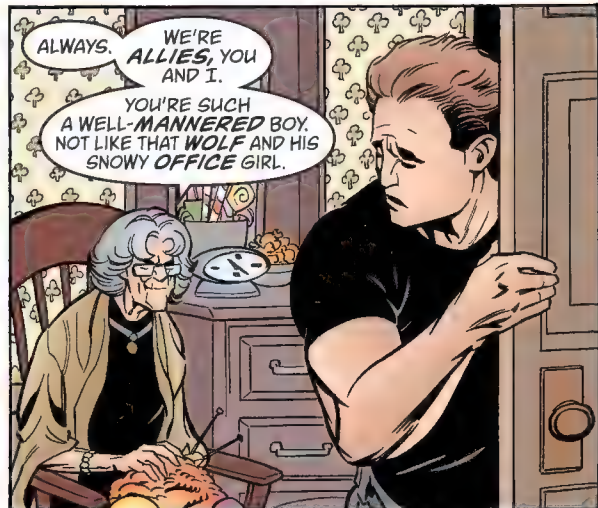
NEVER, DEAR BOY.



SINCE I CAN'T ATTACK THE D'JINN DIRECTLY, LET ME PONDER WHAT I CAN DO TO THOSE WHO MIGHT RELEASE ONE.

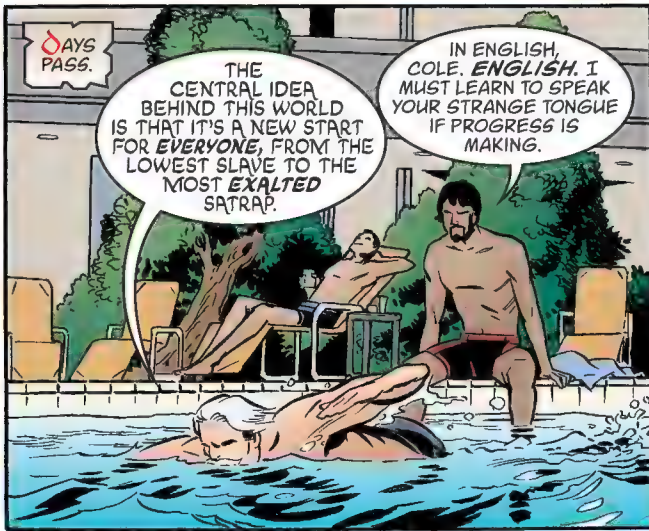
THEN I WON'T TAKE UP ANY MORE OF YOUR TIME.

THANK YOU, FRAU TOTENKINDER. YOU'LL KEEP ME INFORMED?



ALWAYS. WE'RE **ALLIES**, YOU AND I.

YOU'RE SUCH A WELL-MANNERED BOY. NOT LIKE THAT **WOLF** AND HIS **SNOWY OFFICE GIRL**.



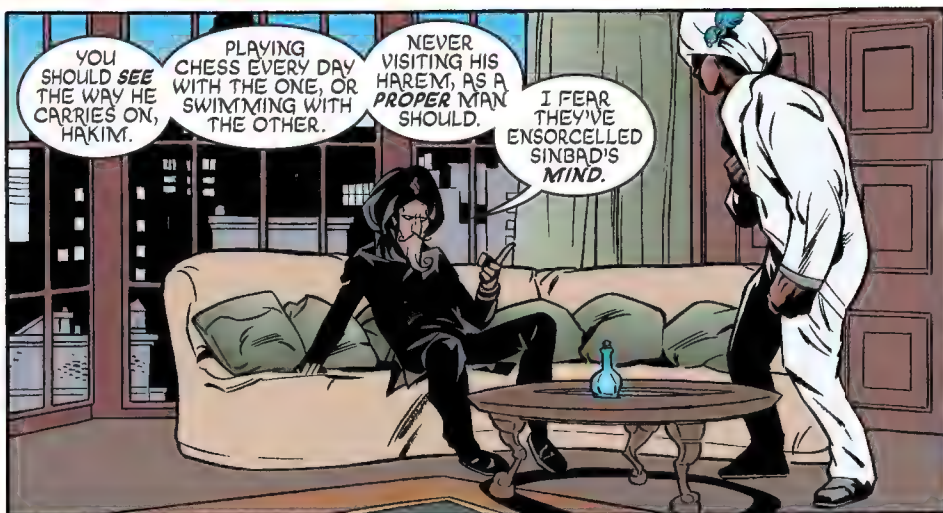
DAYS PASS.

THE CENTRAL IDEA BEHIND THIS WORLD IS THAT IT'S A NEW START FOR *EVERYONE*, FROM THE LOWEST SLAVE TO THE MOST EXALTED SATRAP.

IN ENGLISH, COLE. *ENGLISH*. I MUST LEARN TO SPEAK YOUR STRANGE TONGUE IF PROGRESS IS MAKING.

YOU'RE IN CHECK, SINBAD.

IN THIS GAME ONLY, I HOPE.

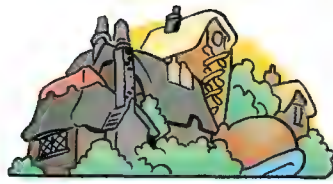


YOU SHOULD *SEE* THE WAY HE CARRIES ON, HAKIM.

PLAYING CHESS EVERY DAY WITH THE ONE, OR SWIMMING WITH THE OTHER.

NEVER VISITING HIS HAREM, AS A *PROPER* MAN SHOULD.

I FEAR THEY'VE ENSORCELLED SINBAD'S MIND.



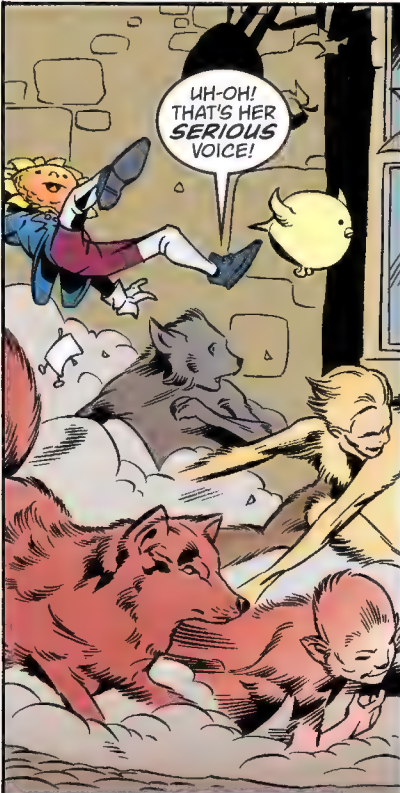
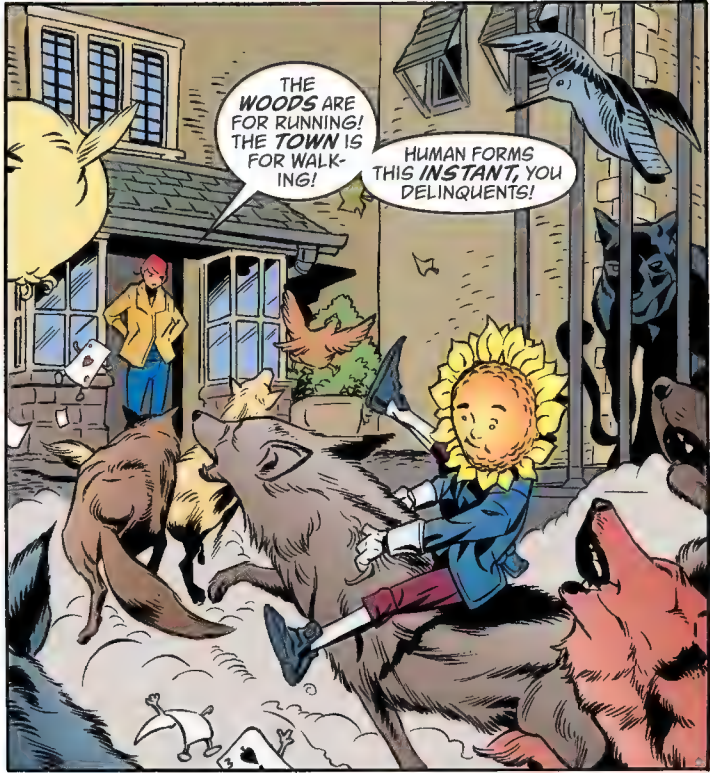
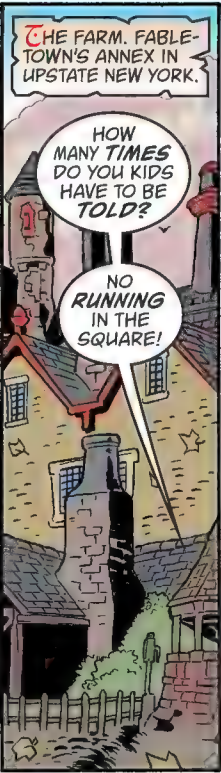
THE FARM, FABLE-TOWN'S ANNEX IN UPSTATE NEW YORK.

HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU KIDS HAVE TO BE TOLD?

NO RUNNING IN THE SQUARE!

THE WOODS ARE FOR RUNNING! THE TOWN IS FOR WALKING!

HUMAN FORMS THIS INSTANT, YOU DELINQUENTS!



UH-OH! THAT'S HER SERIOUS VOICE!

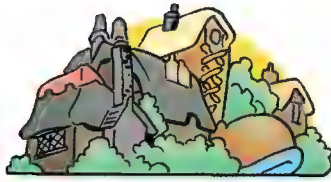


WE'RE SORRY, AUNTIE ROSE.

WHERE DID YOU LEAVE YOUR CLOTHES?

GO FIND THEM AND GET DRESSED, THIS INSTANT!





YES, MA'AM.



WHAT WAS THAT COMMOTION OUT THERE? ARE MY MONSTERS BEING MONSTROUS AGAIN?

NO, JUST KIDS ACTING LIKE KIDS.

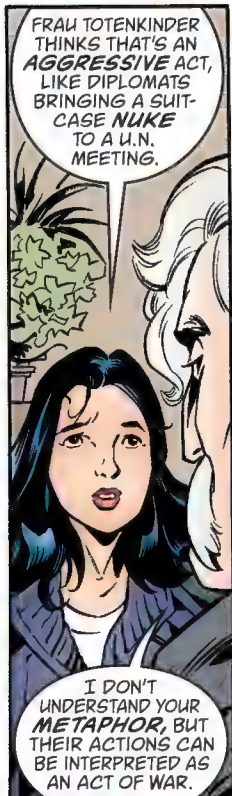
WHAT CAN I SAY?

THEY MAY BE MY GRANDCUBS, BUT THEY'RE BIGBY'S CUBS.



SO WHERE WERE WE?

DISCUSSING THE ARAB FABLE PROBLEM-- SPECIFICALLY THE FACT THAT THEY BROUGHT A D'JINN WITH THEM.



FRAU TOTENKINDER THINKS THAT'S AN AGGRESSIVE ACT, LIKE DIPLOMATS BRINGING A SUITCASE NUKE TO A U.N. MEETING.

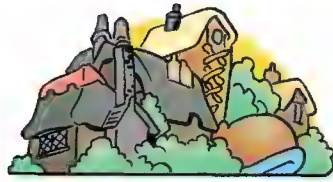
I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR METAPHOR, BUT THEIR ACTIONS CAN BE INTERPRETED AS AN ACT OF WAR.



SO WHAT CAN WE DO? SNOW, DIDN'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH TALKING TO THE ARABIAN FABLES, BACK IN THE EARLY DAYS?

THE THINGS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT OUR HISTORY ALARMS ME, ROSE RED.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.



I'M NOT IN GOVERNMENT ANYMORE, AND I DON'T TALK TO **THOSE** PEOPLE.

OOH, I CAN TELL THERE'S A STORY THERE AND I'M GOING TO **DRAG** IT OUT OF YOU SOMEDAY.

PERHAPS. BUT NOT TODAY.

WE WERE JUST BEGINNING TO DISCUSS WHAT MR. NORTH MIGHT DO AGAINST A D'JINN.

QUITE A LOT, I IMAGINE. HE'S OF THEIR ILK.

REALLY? YOU'RE THAT POWERFUL?

WE ARE RELATED CREATURES--BUT DISTANTLY. WHAT I AM IS THE NORTH WIND IN **ALL** ITS MANIFESTATIONS.

IT'S BEEN SOME LONG AGES SINCE I DID BATTLE WITH A D'JINN. I'VE **MISSED** HAVING SUCH CHALLENGES IN MY LIFE.

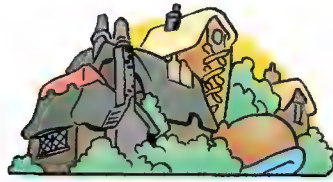
WAIT A MINUTE! ARE YOU TELLING US YOU CAN--

YOU'RE **THAT** POWERFUL?

YOU'RE FINALLY CATCHING ON? BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU **HELP** WHEN WE NEEDED YOU MOST?

WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP THE **ADVERSARY** WHEN HE STARTED **CONQUERING** EVERYTHING?



WHY *WOULD* I? GOVERNMENTS COME AND GO. I'VE SEEN EMPIRES RISE AND FALL AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE DUST TO BE FORGOTTEN.

I'M APART FROM SUCH CONSIDERATIONS. THE ADVERSARY'S MINIONS KNOW TO LEAVE ME ALONE, AND THAT IS ENOUGH.

BUT YOU'RE HERE NOW, *HELPING* US!

THIS IS DIFFERENT. YOU'RE *FAMILY*.

CALM DOWN, ROSE. YOU'LL BUST SOMETHING.

MR. NORTH, YOU'RE SAYING YOU'D BE WILLING TO FIGHT THIS D'JINN? YOU COULD *KILL* IT?

I'D *WELCOME* THE SPORT.

TELL THEM THE REST, MR. NORTH. TELL THEM THE *COST*.

YOU'D CHARGE US?

NO, THE WITCH IS REFERRING TO THE *DAMAGE* SUCH A STRUGGLE WOULD DO TO THIS SMALL MUNDANE WORLD.

TO THE WORLD?

YES, YOUR PEOPLE WOULD HAVE TO *MOVE* AGAIN.





WHAT ARE YOUR COMMANDS, O MASTER OF MY FATE?

MY FIRST WISH IS THIS: YOU WILL FLY BACK TO BAGHDAD AND DESTROY ALL LEADERS OF THE ARABIAN DIASPORA, UNTIL I AM THE HIGHEST-RANKING MINISTER AMONG THE REFUGEES.

MY SECOND WISH IS THIS: YOU WILL RETURN HERE AND SLAY SINBAD, PRINCE CHARMING, KING COLE AND ANY OTHER SOUL WHOSE NAME APPEARS ON THE LIST I WILL PREPARE.

MY THIRD WISH IS THIS: YOU WILL INCREASE ME IN RICHES AND WOMEN AND IN PERSONAL SORCERIES UNTIL I AM SATISFIED AND COMMAND THAT I AM SATIATED.

ARE YOU CERTAIN THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT DONE, MASTER?

HAVEN'T I COMMANDED IT SO?

THEN IT WILL BE DONE.

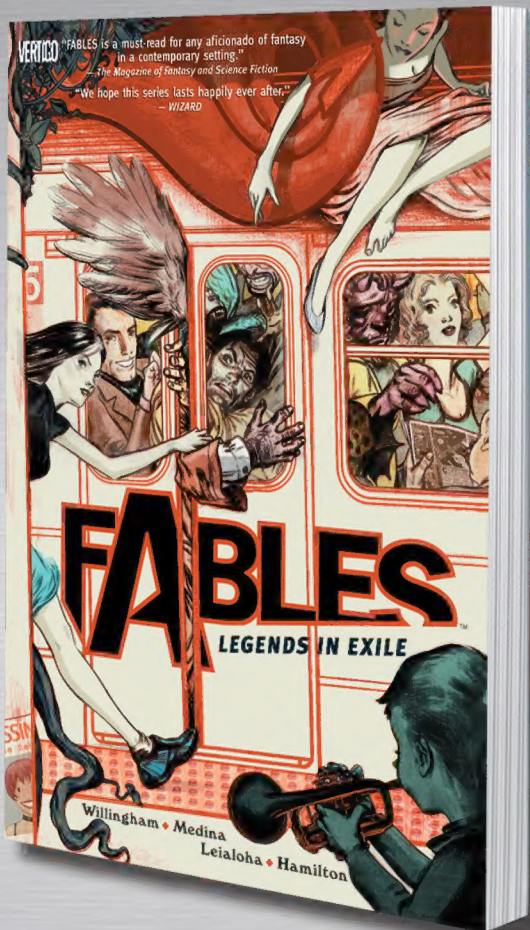
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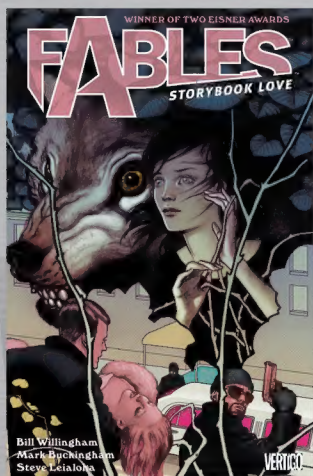
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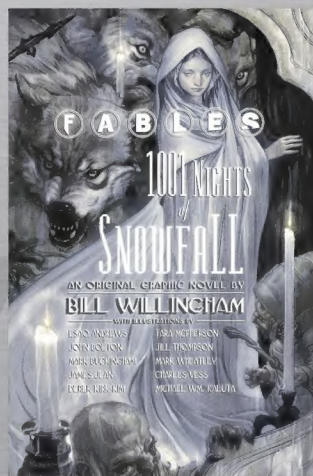
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